From: Hill and Knowlton, Inc., 150 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y., OXford 7-5600

FOR: TOBACCO INDUSTRY RESEARCH COMMITTEE

FOR RELEASE DECEMBER 29, 1960

NEW DIRECTION FOR TOBACCO-HEALTH RESEARCH IN '61, SAYS CHAIRMAN OF TOBACCO INDUSTRY RESEARCH COMMITTEE

By TIMOTHY V. HARTNETT

During 1961, new direction and emphasis will be given to research on tobacco and health, especially the alleged relationship between smoking and lung cancer.

It is apparent, from research sponsored by the Tobacco Industry Research Committee, and by others, that both cancer and heart disease involve complex chains of causation that are little understood.

Future research will be concentrated on trying to determine just how these diseases originate. This knowledge should enable science to determine what part, if any, smoking plays in these diseases. It may be, for example, that smoking merely reflects some characteristic of a type of person who is prone to cancer or heart disease.

It is interesting to observe that the research done by other organizations and individuals also seems to be taking on this new approach.

For years, research sponsored by TIRC, and by others, has concentrated on trying to determine whether direct contact with tobacco smoke could cause cancer, particularly lung cancer. Hundreds of biological and chemical tests have been undertaken. TIRC grantees alone have tried a score of different methods, and many tests of each method.

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The Scientific Director of the TIRC, Dr. Clarence Cook Little, reports that this research, both clinical and experimental, has failed to show that lung cancer can be caused by contact with tobacco smoke. Slowly accumulating research points to the need for a new emphasis or direction.

During the coming year, Dr. Little tells me, new cancer research will concentrate on such areas as these:

1. The possible role of viruses as a cause of cancer. A growing body of evidence, much of it by other research groups, suggests that mysterious viruses may play a key role in cancer. It is important to study how and why this may be.

2. Constitutional differences between smokers and non-smokers. Research shows marked differences between smokers and non-smokers, both physiological and psychological. One recent study found that smokers generally lived at a faster pace than non-smokers. This research and many other studies suggest that some persons may be more likely to get cancer, heart disease and ulcers because of their constitutional makeup. This could mean that smoking habits and certain diseases are characteristic of a type of person, both reflecting underlying constitutional factors.

3. The possible role of previous infections (such as tuberculosis) in causing lung cancer. Accumulating research is finding that the scars left by tubercular infections or other lung damage may in later years become the site of lung cancer.

4. Air pollution as a possible factor in lung cancer and other respiratory and cardiovascular ailments. There is a growing amount of study in this area by a number of noted scientists.

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Other areas receiving increased attention are poor nutrition, exposure to occupational hazards and fumes from motor fuels.

While there is no proof that any one of these is a cause of cancer, there are hundreds of studies suggesting they may play a role. They are major fields in which scientists who are seeking the causes of cancer will concentrate in the coming years.

The one fact that is abundantly clear from the research done throughout the world is this: While science has learned a great deal, the basic causes of lung cancer -- and heart disease -- are not known. Much more research is needed.

As we enter the eighth year of operation of the TIRC, we rededicate ourselves to the goal of providing financial support for independent scientists seeking to learn what effects, if any, tobacco use may have on human health. The evidence to date, from research here and abroad, seems to throw doubt on the charges that tobacco smoking is a major cause of lung cancer. Nor is there any clinical or laboratory evidence that smoking causes heart trouble.

In 1960, the TIRC increased its annual appropriation for research by $300,000 to $800,000 -- this amount will again be allotted for grants in 1961. Research funds through 1960 totaled $4 million. Some 105 scientists in hospitals, medical colleges and research laboratories throughout the country have received grants-in-aid from the Scientific Advisory Board to the TIRC, which determines the research program. These scientists have published more than 135 reports on their research, contributing valuable knowledge to the medical and scientific fields.

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